

*NMSA Conference,
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LAUNCHING
LEARNING CENTERS
IN THE
MIDDLE GRADES



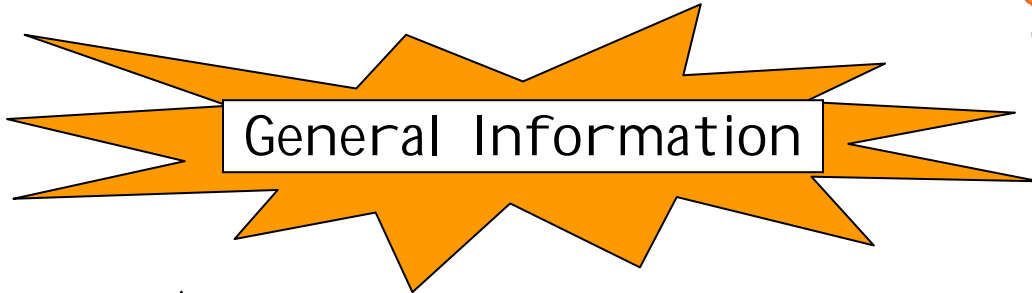
**Presented
By**

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LAUNCHING LEARNING CENTERS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES



General Information

DEFINITION

Learning centers are designated activities that provide an engaging way for students to work independently of the teacher in small groups, pairs, or individually to reinforce and extend classroom learning. Learning centers for middle school students are designed with the middle-level student in mind.

BENEFITS

- supports current adolescent literacy research (see bibliography)
- supports current research on adolescent development (see bibliography)
- motivates students (allows students to take charge of their own learning)
- appeals to social nature of middle school students (group activities)
- meets academic needs of individual students (differentiated activities and individual/small group meetings with the teacher)
- incorporates reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing through Garner's Multiple Intelligences and Bloom's Taxonomy

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- learning styles inventory
- reading survey
- reading levels (STAR, Gates, Informal Spelling tests, etc.)
- writing survey
- writing sample
- state test scores
- sight word assessment
- phonics assessment
- vocabulary pretest
- content pretest

START SIMPLE

- Whole-Class Activities
- Fun Fridays
- Establish rules/expectations
- Model, Model, Model all activities AND have direction cards at all stations
- Accountability (checklists, learning logs, exit slips, rubrics, self-evaluation, anecdotal records, etc.)
- Teacher works with small groups (may need to start by facilitating centers)
- Differentiate based on reading selections. Later, differentiate based on skills/activities

TYPES OF STATIONS (can use combinations of these)

- Rotating (rotate students through activities, or rotate activities through groups of students)
- Individualized Stations (students/groups only use the stations they need or to which they are assigned)
- Sequential Learning Stations (students must work through the activities in a particular order and proceed with mastery)
- Thematic Stations (all activities set up to support a specific unit of study)
- Enrichment Stations (stations that can be selected after assigned stations are completed)

FREQUENCY OF STATIONS

- Daily (1-2 stations a day)
- Once a week ("Fun Fridays")
- 2 times a week
- 3 times a week
- Every three weeks
- Once a reporting period (six/nine weeks)
- At the end of a unit of study
- Sample Schedules (FA, ML, Stations, Wrap-up)

SAMPLE SCHEDULES

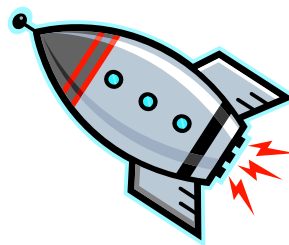
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| Focus Activity (5min) Go over FA (3-5min) Mini-Lesson/Class Activity (10-15min) 1 Center (20min) Wrap Up (5-10min) | Focus Activity (5min) Go over FA (3-5min) Mini-Lesson/Class Activity (15-20min) 2-3 Centers (45-60min) Wrap Up (5-10min) |
|--|--|

TYPES OF GROUPS

- group by need/skill
- group by activity
- group by literature
- group by interest
- group by learning styles
- random grouping (# drawn, students wearing red, etc.)
- self-selected grouping (students select their own groups)
- flexible grouping (change groups as needed for any/all of the above)

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

- file folder games/activities
- envelope games/activities
- magnetic games/activities
- interactive bulletin boards
- box games/activities
- gift bag games/activities
- computer games/activities
- listening center activities
- self-correcting activities
- activity menus
- tiered assignments



- commercial learning centers/activities (see bibliography)
- commercial ELA games (QUIET: Scrabble™, Upwords™, Wordigo™, Word Sweep™, Word Thief™, Quiddler™, Words Galore™, Boggle™, NOISY: Blurt, Buzz Word™, Scattorgories™, Outburst Jr.™, Word Sense™, Nameits™, Smart Mouth™, A-Z Game™, Cranium Cadoo™, 25 Words or Less™)

IDEAS FOR DECORATING ACTIVITIES/STATIONS

- computer clipart, shapes, etc.
- stickers
- cartoons
- teen magazine pictures
- candy wrappers
- fast food wrappers
- advertisement pictures
- scrapbook paper
- die-cut shapes
- wrapping paper
- student art



VOCABULARY/WORD STUDY

- Vowels
- Consonants
- Compound Words
- Contractions
- Context Clues
- Prefixes
- Suffixes
- Greek and Latin Roots
- Dictionary Pronunciation Guide
- Accent
- Syllabication
- Denotation/Connotation
- Multi-Meaning Words
- Synonyms/Antonyms
- Similes
- Metaphors
- Analogies
- Idioms
- Proverbs
- Most Commonly Misspelled Words



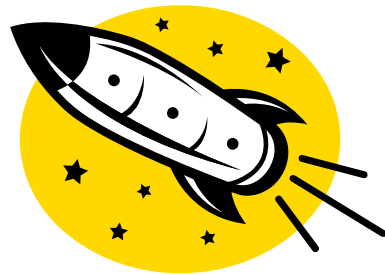
- Activities:
 - * Word Sorts (Reading Advantage™)
 - * Dictionary Activities
 - * Weekly Big Words
 - * Concentration
 - * Guess that Word (dictionary pronunciations)
 - * Word Play (Hink Pinks, Palindromes, Versa Tiles™, etc.)
 - * Commercial Games (Outburst™, Scrabble™, Blur™, Scatagories™, Boggle™, etc.)
 - * Poetry Practice/Activities (Prelutsky poems)

FLUENCY (ORAL READING)

- Partner Reading
- Echo Reading
- Choral Reading
- Reader's Theater
- Timed Reading (poetry, picture books, short stories, articles, etc.)
- Books on Tape
- Fluency Practice Cards (with any literature)
- Literature Circles
- Tongue Twisters (create/practice reading/vote on best ones)
- Newspaper/Magazine Articles
- Fry's 300 Instant Words (sight words)
- Content Vocabulary Word Lists
- Spelling Demon Lists

COMPREHENSION

- Before Reading Activities
 - * Quick Scans
 - * Picture Predictions
- During Reading Activities
 - * Say Something
 - * Focus Skill
- After Reading Activities
 - * Making Metaphors
 - * 4-Square Comments
 - * Differentiated Instruction Activity Grids
- Versa Tiles™
- Reading Skills Board Games (ETA)
- Magazine Activities
- Newspaper Activities
- Phone Book/Yellow Pages Activities
- Map Activities
- Cereal Box Activities
- Food Label Activities
- Medicine Label Activities
- Propaganda
- Driving Test Booklets



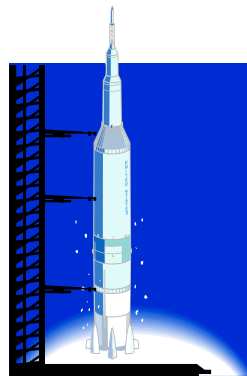
- Skills Activities
 - * **Tone**—make/decorate posters to illustrate difficult tone words.
 - * **Idioms**—Read through list/book of idioms. Choose one to use in a sentence/illustrate on index cards/posters to decorate the hall/classroom. Variation: choose idioms that define you and your friends or characters from a book.
 - * **Symbols**—Create a shield using at least 5 symbols (provide symbols list) to represent yourself/character in book.
 - * **Main Idea (Listening Station)**—listen to different songs and list the main idea/create a title for each song.
 - * **Main Idea**—create titles for a group of newspaper articles that have the original title removed. Write these titles on a sheet that goes with each article (include group members' names). Vote on best titles.
 - * **Summary**—students listen to songs that tell a story and then use a graphic organizer to create summaries for each one.
 - * **Summary**—create word cards for a picture book that include character names, setting words, words that denote the problem, and words that support the conclusion. Students read these, write a summary of what they think the story will be about, listen to the story on tape, then make adjustments in their predicted summary to reflect what the story was really about.
 - * **Inference**—draw conclusions from a list of picture cards. Write inferences on a post-it note on back of each card (don't duplicate inferences—only add new inferences to the list).

QUESTIONING (includes state test prep)

- Blooms Questions
- Versa Tiles™ for self-correcting
- Create Test/TAKS questions/answer choices for a short story using stem cards
- Small Group Practice Game--teams/pairs of students must support answer from text. If correct, shoot basket for team points.
- TIL Journals for short stories/picture books/articles
- Commercial Cards, spinners, cubes, balls
- Open-Ended Canned Cards (fiction/non-fiction)
- Open-ended File Folder Cards

LISTENING

- Novels/textbooks on tape
- Articles on tape
- Poetry on tape
- Picture books on tape
- Short stories on tape
- Songs on tape
- Directions/Activities on tape
- Before/During/After-Listening Activities:
 - * Literature Circle Books
 - * SSR/TAKS Connection
 - * TAKS Stem Question Creation
 - * Graphic Organizers (rdg strategies, story elements, genre, etc.)
 - * Response to Lit. (oral/written)



- * Versa Tiles™—answer/create after listening

COMPUTER

- Webquests <http://www.webquest.org/index.php>
- Blue Webbin: <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/bluewebn/>
- Trackstar activities <http://trackstar.4teachers.org/trackstar/index.jsp>
- Computer Integration Activities
http://www.swlauriersb.qc.ca/english/edservices/pedresources/webquest/integrating_tech_nolgy.htm
- Response to Literature Logs (MS WORD or Online) <http://nancykeane.com/booktalks/>
- Author Bulletin Boards/Ppts./Brochures
<http://trackstar.4teachers.org/trackstar/ts/viewTrack.do?number=243756>
- Faux Main Page Website Design (Use Publisher or Word)
- Online Games <http://quizhub.com/quiz/quizhub.cfm>
http://www.internet4classrooms.com/lang_mid.htm
- Question Logs (Word)
- Books/Stories Online <http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/stories.html>
- Publish Writing Online <http://ncsu.edu/midlink/>
- Create Your Own Game Boards
<http://jc-schools.net/tutorials/gameboard.htm#makeyourown>

INTERACTIVE BULLETIN BOARDS

- Matching with string (words/definitions, synonyms/antonyms, analogies, etc.)
- Plot Diagrams
- Velcro/Magnet/Tack manipulation activities
- "Voice" Examples (students copy on cards from class reading)
- Favorite Words (students create on cards from class reading)
- What Good Reader's Do (reading strategy activities)
- Word Snails (students create words inside the snail using letter tiles. The words must relate to a specific theme and the next word must start with the same letter of the last word)

MAGNETIC CENTERS (File Cabinets, etc.)

- Poetic word tiles (arrange to create original poems/sentences, etc.)
- Games
- Matching activities
- Word Snail Boards

ART

- Author Bulletin Boards
- Book Ads (posters)
- Brochures
- Obituaries
- Missing Person's Posters
- Wanted Person's Posters
- Collages
- Stamp sets, colored pens/chalks/pencils, crayons, markers, construction paper, magazines, stickers, shape templates, scissors, rulers



WRITING

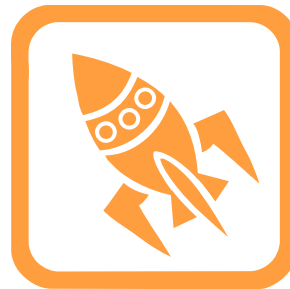
- Reading Like a Writer (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions; poetry, current events, magazines, books, articles, literary analysis)
- Prewriting/Idea Exploration (organization/ideas—menu creations for characters/time/place; design character/book websites; poetry-- found/parallel poetry, character poems, setting poems, non-rhyming picture poems, etc.)
- Editing (conventions—create sentences, etc.)
- Revising (ideas, organization, voice, sentence fluency, word choice)
- Publishing (layout, art, handwriting, calligraphy)
- Questioning (grammar games, test practice games, response to literature, computer questions, literary/poetic analysis (TPCASTT, PITSFIT))

SCIENCE

- Scientists
- Science Jobs
- Problem Solving/Brain Teasers
- How Things Work
- Question Center
- Review Center
- Vocabulary/Word Study

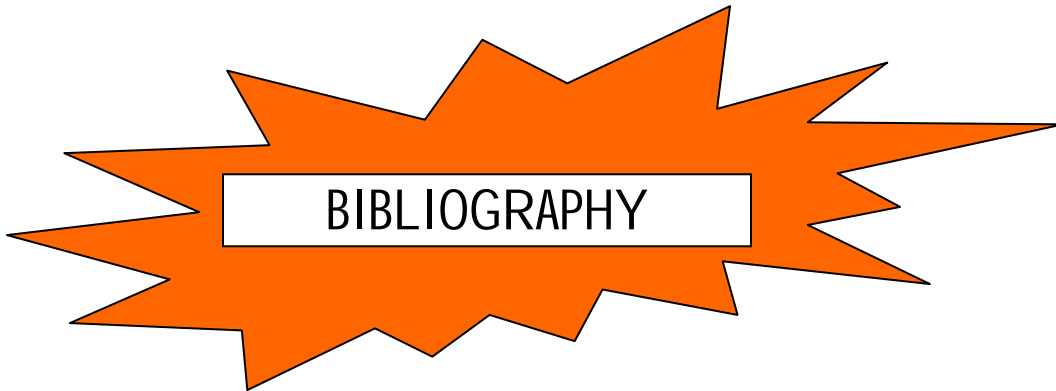
SOCIAL STUDIES

- Reading
- Listening
- Word Study
- Question Center
- Current Events
- Biography
- Connections
- Geography
- Plot Diagrams



MATH

- Numbers/Place Value
- Multiplication/Division
- Fractions/Decimals
- Measurement
- Probability & Statistics
- Problem Solving
- Algebra
- Geometry



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